



Meeting Summary June 14, 2017

Attendance

Panel Members: Hank Alinger, Chair
Don Taylor, Vice Chair
Bob Gorman
Weiwei Jia
Sujit Mishra
Julie Wilson
Fred Marino (Recused for Review of Lakefront Core Design Guidelines Only)

DPZ Staff: Valdis Lazdins, Randy Clay, George Saliba, Yvette Zhou

Plan #17-07: Lakefront Core Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Owner/Developer: The Howard Hughes Corporation

Design Team: Design Collective, Groundswell

1. Call to Order – DAP Chair Hank Alinger opened the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Mr. Alinger asked the DAP, staff, and project team to introduce themselves.

2. Review of Lakefront Core Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Background

The Lakefront Core Neighborhood is in Downtown Columbia, along the western edge of Lake Kittamaqundi and eastern edge of Little Patuxent Parkway. The Guidelines propose standards for urban and street design, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, amenity spaces, architecture, and signage and wayfinding.

Applicant Presentation

The Howard Hughes team gave a multimedia presentation about the project. The Neighborhood Design Guidelines must be consistent with the Downtown Wide Guidelines and the applicant is proposing to expand the boundary of the Lakefront Core, as they now own the American City building and the Copelands's garage. They intend to develop a comprehensive master plan and design guidelines for the Lakefront Core; including the frontage along Little Patuxent Parkway (LPP).

Improved pedestrian, bike, and vehicle connections are a key component of the Downtown Wide Guidelines and the vision is to improve connections between the Mall, surrounding offices, and the lakefront. The applicant noted that they are working closely with the Columbia Association, who also own property within the Lakefront Core.

One of the most important links in the Lakefront Core is the connection from the lakefront across LLP to the mall. The expanded boundary will allow this connection to be planned in a more holistic manner, while also continuing the shared use pathway on the east side of LPP. By expanding the boundary, better connections can be achieved throughout the entire area, consistent with the Downtown Wide Guidelines.

The applicant also proposes to extend and connect Wincopin Circle, per the street framework plan in the Guidelines; which will provide a better connected street network within the neighborhood. Wincopin Circle is envisioned as a narrow, pedestrian-oriented street that will enhance internal neighborhood circulation. It will be designed to also function as a plaza when the street is closed, allowing pedestrians to move across freely during special events. When open, it will provide access for retail shops, with on-street parking.

Sustainability is incorporated into each section of the Guidelines and provided in its entirety from the Downtown Wide Guidelines.

The block dimensions comply with the Downtown Wide Guidelines. Important corners, intersections, and building locations with terminated vistas and gateway opportunities will be identified, paying special attention to architectural details.

The Downtown Wide Guidelines building height plan recommends buildings along the east side of LPP between the Mall access road that connects to the Whole Foods parking lot and Sterrett Place to not exceed nine stories, while also encouraging a variety of building heights and providing for height sub-zones to be modified, while maintaining consistency with intent of the Downtown Wide Guidelines. The Lakefront Core Neighborhood Design Guidelines propose to increase building heights along the east side of LPP to a maximum 15 stories, but do not change building heights directly along the lakefront. The applicant showed the heights of existing buildings adjacent to the Lakefront Core and noted that topography steps down towards the lakefront. This relationship supports the idea of establishing taller buildings with a 15-story maximum along the east side of LPP.

While it will still serve as a major route for vehicles, LPP will be redesigned with crosswalks and potentially on-street parking to make it more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The proposed lane and street dimensions are consistent with those specified in the Downtown Wide Guidelines.

The Downtown Wide Design Guidelines recommend building setbacks to be no less than 10 feet and no greater than 25 feet. The applicant has found that the 10-foot setback is too narrow and is, therefore, proposing setbacks along LPP that are no less than 15 feet. They also propose to increase setbacks, exceeding the 25 feet, up to approximately 35 feet, where appropriate. This will help provide a well-designed streetscape, together with the shared use path.

Amenity space is a key component of the Lakefront Core. Amenity spaces will be designed to enhance linkages within the neighborhood and to adjacent neighborhoods. The applicant proposes more amenity space than required by the Downtown Wide Design Guidelines. The three amenity spaces include the Lakefront Connection, the existing Columbia Association open space, and the neighborhood square, required by the Downtown Wide Design Guidelines. There are significant

grade changes along the lakefront that make access challenging. A terraced lawn will step down at different levels, inter-connected by an accessible pathway. Landscaping will define and enhance different amenity zones. Flexible seating and spaces will be incorporated throughout. The new amenity spaces are designed to draw people to the waterfront. An expanded deck along the water's edge will expand the existing promenade and public art and creative seating options that extend out over the water will help activate the space.

The architectural section of the Guidelines identifies primary and secondary streets, active frontages, primary building entrances, and denotes that service and loading areas should not be located on primary roadways. Building typologies and forms are included, consistent with the Downtown Wide Design Guidelines. Building materials and elements and storefront standards are also included.

Signage types, standards, and locations are included in the Guidelines, consistent with the Downtown Wide Design Guidelines.

The renderings shown to the DAP of the Lakefront Core neighborhood helped describe and provided an idea how the proposed redevelopment relates to the Guidelines.

Staff Presentation

Staff identified four topics on which the DAP should focus their comments and recommendations:

- 1) What is the appropriate design approach along LPP regarding building frontage, setbacks, and streetscape?
- 2) What does the DAP recommend concerning building heights along Little Patuxent Parkway?
- 3) What does the DAP recommend regarding the connection of Wincopin Circle?
- 4) What does the DAP recommend about the amenity spaces proposed by the applicant?

DAP Questions and Comments

The DAP agreed that connecting Wincopin Circle is important to the Lakefront Core. Designing this connection to create a primarily pedestrian-focused experience, while still allowing vehicles is important. This street should be flexible and closed for special events using bollards or a similar treatment.

The DAP asked why the parking lot west of Whole Foods was not included in the expanded Lakefront Core boundary. The applicant responded that while Whole Foods exists that site will remain a surface parking lot for their use. It would be addressed later, once the greater Lakefront Neighborhood is brought forward.

The DAP asked how amenity spaces, including the connection across LPP and Wincopin Circle towards the lakefront, relate to surrounding streets. The applicant responded that while the site across LPP is not under their ownership, they will nevertheless coordinate the design of the connection with adjacent property owners. The design of this space on the east side of LPP will include landscaping and decorative paving, creating a clearly identifiable connection down to the lakefront. The neighborhood amenity space that it connects to has also been shifted slightly so that it better aligns with the pedestrian bridge across LPP. This shift results in a strong, centered axis from the mall to the lakefront. The DAP felt that coordinating with the mall owner on this connection was important to create a cohesive connection and amenity space.

The DAP further noted the importance of maintaining views to the lakefront from the mall and that the amenity space connecting the mall to the lakefront should not be impaired by misplaced trees

and structures. Maintaining visibility will be an effective way of getting people to walk from the mall to the lakefront. In addition, the DAP recommended providing activity along LPP; at a minimum, locating buildings entrances at corners along LPP to draw pedestrians toward the lakefront.

The DAP supported a flexible, but increased setback along LPP.

The DAP asked about the proposed 15 story building heights along LPP. The applicant responded that they are consistent with adjacent development. Additionally, condominiums are a possibility and increased building heights allow for steel and concrete construction. This will allow more design options, including a building base with amenity spaces above and towers that extend up to 15 stories.

The DAP supported 15-story maximum building heights along the east side of LPP. The DAP noted the importance of stepping back or stepping down that portion of a building facing the lakefront. This would allow amenity spaces on top of the roof facing the lakefront.

The DAP encouraged the applicant to utilize shared parking between office, retail, recreational, and residential uses to the extent possible. The applicant noted that parking structures would be integrated with the buildings.

DAP Motions for Recommendations

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

1. The applicant include in the guidelines a concept that provides a strong visual connection between the mall and lakefront. Such a connection should be inviting and encourage people to walk from the mall to the lakefront with views that are unobstructed by trees or structures. Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

2. The applicant bring retail and/or building entrances around the corner of a building fronting Little Patuxent Parkway to activate this important street. Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

Note: The applicant asked if activating building corners on LPP could include lobby entrances, as opposed to having an entire retail frontage on LPP. The DAP agreed that this would be acceptable.

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

3. The applicant design the Wincopin Circle connection as a predominantly pedestrian-focused experience, with flexibility to limit vehicles during special events. This connection should be prioritized - 70% on pedestrians and 30% on vehicles. On-street parking should only be on the retail side of Wincopin Circle extension, not along the green and amenity space side. Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 6-0 to approve

3. Other Business

The election of DAP officers.

DAP Chair Hank Alinger made the following motion:

- 1) Don Taylor nominated as Chair and Bob Gorman nominated as Vice Chair. Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson

Vote: 7-0 to approve

4. Call to Adjourn

DAP Chair Hank Alinger adjourned the meeting at 8:23p.m.